

(1) There are in the mental hospitals of New Zealand 319 cases of old people who could more appropriately and less expensively be attended to in homes for the aged, controlled by the Hospitals Boards. I have excluded from this number 154 more who would require more exacting attention than that normally provided in such homes.

(2) There are in the Richmond and Otekaike special residential schools of the Education Department several children who are non-educable, and who are more properly subjects to be dealt with in a custodial home.

(3) In the Nelson home for low-grade defectives under the Mental Hospitals Department there are several boys who could be trained in suitable occupations.

(4) Since the closing of the Te Oronga Home many girls of the morally defective class have been sent to the mental hospitals. Some of these girls could be rendered at any rate partially self-supporting if detained in an industrial school with suitable discipline and training. It is a straining of the Mental Defectives Act to keep them in mental hospitals, and it is also unfair to the girls.

(5) There appears to be considerable doubt as to the relative functions of the Borstal institutions and the residential schools of the Education Department. The inevitable result of this overlapping and lack of definition of function is that it is often extremely difficult to secure for any individual case entrance to the institution most likely to meet its requirements.

Border-line mental cases generally are dealt with in the second part of this report, but two classes may fittingly be discussed at this stage: (1) "Difficult" girls, (2) male sexual offenders.

Difficult Girls.

The question of the so-called "oversexed" girl presents peculiar difficulties because of the very different factors which enter into these cases. I think that the term "oversexed" is misleading, the sexual prominence being due in most cases to a generalized failure of self-control and not to overdevelopment in that one direction. The distinction is important because in many instances these girls cannot be described as sexual degenerates, their sexual experiences being in a measure accidental or incidental to the environment to which their general indiscipline has led them.

It would be as wrong to condemn every delinquent girl who has had illicit sexual experience to an institution earmarked for sexual cases as it would be to commit every destitute child found out in an offence against the laws to a home for delinquents. There is far too much tendency to attach to these children such labels as "oversexed" or "delinquent," and to treat them in corresponding institutions without reference to the niceties of each case. The so-called "anti-social tendencies" may not, after all, be innate "tendencies," but merely the result of a precocious familiarization with the physical details of sex, which has led to an easy acceptance of a lower than normal standard of morality.

One fully realizes the social necessity for an exacting code in this matter, but do we always make due allowance for the environmental influences which may have led, if not obviously to the sexual lapse itself, at any rate to the mental habit which made acquiescence less difficult than it would have been under better home conditions?

On the other hand, there are girls who are sexual degenerates, who are not accessible to reformative influences and who corrupt their associates. One likes to be optimistic, and each case should have every consideration, but it is of paramount importance that the objects of an institution devoted to the reformation of girls should not be defeated by the continued residence within its walls of a girl who is, humanly speaking, irredeemable and pernicious in her influence.

These cases are dealt with in New Zealand by the Education Department, and, under the "Borstal Act," by the Prisons Department, and also to some extent by the Mental Hospitals Department; but the lack of a central co-ordinating authority with power to decide on the merits of each case prevents full benefit being derived from the provisions made for this class of case. There is a lack of complete understanding as to the essential roles which should be played by the Departments concerned.

One of the most interesting experiences of my trip was a visit I paid to Sleighton Farm, near Philadelphia. Sleighton Farm is a school for young girls who get into trouble and come before the Courts. All the girls are formally committed by the Court, and the majority have had sexual experiences varying from embryonic prostitution to incest, while an appreciable percentage are found on admission to have venereal disease. The girls are committed until they reach the age of twenty-one years, but the school authorities like, if possible, to parole them to suitable families at the age of sixteen. The usual length of residence is about two years. No very young children are admitted, because it is recognized that foster-parents are better than institutions. On the other hand, no girls over eighteen are admitted.

The general aims and objects and the history of Sleighton Farm are well set forth in the pamphlet which I am appending to this report, but I may supplement it by stating that I stayed at the farm for two days and nights and made a detailed inspection, sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by one of the staff or pupils. The whole school conveyed to me an impression of efficiency, breadth of vision, common-sense, and success. There was a refreshing absence of any reformatory or institution atmosphere, and an entire dissociation from the hide-bound traditions with which such places tend to surround themselves. Theoretical considerations have never entered largely into the management of this successful school, with its roll of five hundred pupils consisting largely of those whom we would term "difficult girls."

Psychological knowledge is evidenced in almost every detail of management—not the much-vaunted Freudian "new psychology," with its Oedipus complex, but a real knowledge and understanding of child mentality and of the methods most likely to secure co-operation, readjustment, and a normal expression of the hitherto misdirected energy.